

# MAJR

the magazine of a movement





**DISCOVER  
WHAT  
MOVES  
YOU**

*Photo by Kristen VanLeer and Najee Watson*



# Welcome to MAJR

The digital magazine created by some crazy college students

## What are we up to?

We're out to change the world with our ideas, talents, and passions. We call it social good. We want our work to matter, and this is where we celebrate and inspire each other to make a difference.

## Why MAJR?

Because we see our college major as the first place we take a stand for our future. Think about it. In our transition from high school to college, we have a big decision to make. What are we going to pursue that will ultimately provide value to the world and fulfill us at the same time? We see our major as the place we take a stand for ourselves and for our work in the world. We want our work to matter and be rewarding, while having as much fun as possible!

## Why should you read our magazine?

Read MAJR, to support other college students who are up to big things in the world. Read MAJR to celebrate a culture of young people doing positive things. Read MAJR because you're a change maker and a game changer at heart. When you connect with the stories of other students discovering their place in the world, you'll start to see new possibilities for yourself. Your own unique path will become a little more clear.

Our Spring Issue is themed "Discover" for that reason. We'll be featuring some incredible students and stories to explore. By creating MAJR, we hope you'll start to discover what moves you. We believe when you discover what moves you, you'll start to move others. And we think that's amazing.

We hope you enjoy the Spring Issue and if you're inspired, let us know. Each issue of MAJR is created by students like you so reach out and tell us what you want to see in the next issue.. Who knows, maybe it'll be you!



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# HOW MY MAJOR IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE



By Philip Freda  
St. Joseph's University

While a large chunk of my time is dedicated to graduate coursework and independent research in biology, my free time is devoted to a program called GeoKids LINKS.

In collaboration with the Wagner Free Institute of Science and the Philadelphia School District, GeoKIDS offers me the opportunity to teach hands-on science to first through fifth graders in Philadelphia public schools with seven other fellows. Collaborating with Wagner educators, our goal is to make science fun and accessible while instilling wonder for the natural world.

This year, I led two first-grade classes, teaching lessons in geology, biology and ecology. We have our students participate in fieldwork, use their senses to observe the world around them, form hypotheses, perform experiments, and discuss their results. By fifth grade, they are well educated on the scientific method and create their own experiments as budding scientists!

One of my previous students, Kevin, exemplifies how well the program works. Kevin started school a couple of weeks later than his class and struggled with writing, spelling, and reading. I saw a kind of determination, however, that shined through week after week. He didn't participate in class much or ask questions but was always attentive, listening to my presentations and watching demonstrations intensely. By the end of the year, not only was Kevin able to read and write as well as his peers but he also provided some of the most insightful observations. He was also drawing amazing pictures that were not only beautiful but were scientifically accurate. His teacher later told me that Kevin looked forward to GeoKids as it provided him the ability to be creative and find his special niche.

My students remind me why I decided to become a scientist with their wonder, excitement and inquisitiveness. As a graduate student, biologist and aspiring researcher, I feel it is partially my responsibility to bring science into the mainstream and inform the next generation of the importance of science. Biology teaches us about the living world but it also teaches us to treat every living thing, especially the whole of humanity, with respect and dignity. With each passing week I see my students become more curious and eager to learn. They are becoming more conscious of their ability and feel a greater sense of responsibility and empowerment.

The children of inner-city Philadelphia have to overcome many challenges. The GeoKids program provides them tools to succeed both academically and as lifetime learners. It is truly an honor to give back and be part of a program that provides students the power to achieve and believe in themselves.

The children aren't the only ones who benefit, as my fellowship has also impacted me for the better. As a result of the program, I have become more comfortable as a public speaker and teacher. Seeing my students every week provides me motivation that carries over into my professional life. I will never forget the positive effects I have received from my students nor the good I have been a part of as a GeoKids fellow.

# ESSENTIALS

The Panama Hat gets a revisit, and serves communities in South America.

Your bags have been packed for Spring Break for weeks and you're ready to hit the beach in your favorite bathing suit. It's time to get away from the books, the papers and the professors. But before you take off for a tropical escapade, there's one important accessory you might be forgetting. Ladies and gentlemen, the Greenpacha Panama hat.

You may have seen your favorite celebrity or supermodel sporting these everywhere from the beach to the pool to the nightclub. That's because these hats are one of the best day-to-night pieces for any lucky guy or girl's vacation wardrobe.

Gentlemen, leave the boyish baseball hats at home and pick up the "Eco Fer" or "Fedora Traveller." Not only will you look like a million bucks in nothing but your board shorts and a hat, you can also make the suave transition to a night-on-the-town just by adding a button down. Forget the beach bum, be a beach stud! Greenpacha hats will definitely have you

blending in with the locals and don't be surprised if your friends start copying your style.

For the ladies, the "Blake" is one of many looks that will go well with your choice of bikinis. Whether you go for a sleek all-black look, or prefer swimwear in colorful fun patterns, the "Blake" is an easy bet to look cute effortlessly! After the beach, wear your hat with a slinky maxi dress and your favorite pair of wedges for a simply sexy look, or look more relaxed and pair your hat with your favorite denim shorts and a flowy blouse. Leave the gift shop hats behind for tourists, and pick up a classic, yet modern piece with a unique style and distinguished design.

Greenpacha actually means "Green Times" in the Aymara language and with no pesticides or toxic chemicals used in the making of the hats you can look good and feel good about your purchase. We know the Greenpacha hat will be a part of your wardrobe for years to come.



Greenpacha  
*Hats for a better world.*

By Kaitlin Marie Manion  
Temple University

VISIT [GREENPACHA.COM](http://GREENPACHA.COM) TO SHOP SPRING STYLES!

# SPRING BREAK TRAVEL TIPS

by Spencer Hunter  
Arizona State University

You're going to have a blast this Spring Break, but where you go, how you get there, and what you do when you get there can have a big impact. While your college woes and concerns will be left far behind, here are MAJR's top tips to have an amazing break and create a positive impact while making the most of your time off.

## Where You Go

Let's face it, the reigning kings of Spring Break destinations are places like Miami Beach, South Padre Island, Cancun, Puerto Vallarta, and the Bahamas. Our generation is a creative one though and with the growing ambition to help others, alternative Spring Breaks are also becoming more popular. Instead of hitting the beachfront party scene,

why not travel to some equally exotic destinations and volunteer? Ask about experiences through your school or check out International Volunteer HQ, where you can visit places like Mexico, Costa Rica, Bali, Thailand, and Brazil for the cost of your plane ticket and program costs as low as \$200. The feeling of giving back to your global community is just as great or better than the fun of another beer pong championship.

**How You Get There**  
Regardless of where you go, how you get there is definitely a factor for your costs and the impact it'll have. Did you know for every gallon of fuel used to drive or fly you to your destination, 20 pounds

of carbon dioxide are released? If you're hitting the highway for a classic road trip, we suggest taking a hybrid to cut down on both the costs of gas and your carbon footprint. If you'll be flying, try renting a hybrid or electric car at your destination. If it's a more popular beach or tourist community, a car might not be needed at all if you can walk or bike to most places from your hotel with the proper planning.

**What You Do**  
If you're worried about the costs of being an eco-friendly traveler, one way to save some money is to share a hotel room with friends. For those going abroad, staying in hostels is the traditional way to do this and it allows for a more

interactive social experience as you share dorms with other travelers.

Large hotel chains are typical to stay in but you can also help out some locals and rent a room at a boutique hotel or a vacation home with private local owners. Do your research and be smart about where you're staying, but locally owned accommodations are more likely to reinvest their money in the local communities rather than the large hotel corporations.

Another way to help out the local communities is to try "Mom and Pop shops" to experience local culture and traditions. Leave your comfort bubble and try local traditions and foods. You can eat McDonald's or KFC

any day back home, so try some street tacos in Mexico or the fresh fish of the Bahamas.

A staple of destinations around the world is also the local farmer's market, where you can try local foods, shopping, and enjoy some entertainment. Farmers markets embody the community in which you are visiting and can lead to some great discoveries on your trip.

When you aren't enjoying the international drinking age with a cold cerveza on the beach, partaking in activities with an environmentally low impact such as surfing, snorkeling, sight-seeing, biking, hiking, or trekking are all recommended as long as

you are not interfering with the natural habitats.

If you are at the beach or out camping, small things such as picking up some trash and helping recycle can also make a big difference. Imagine a mass of tourists coming into your town and leaving behind their garbage for you to clean up. A clean beach or park is always more fun to throw a party at than a minefield of bottles, cans, and trash.

Wherever you travel to, your effort in sustainable tourism can have a big impact in helping local environments, cultures, and economies. So this Spring Break, try to take a small step in environmental stewardship and remember MAJR's sustainable travelling tips!



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# THON ON

by Emily Claire Bryonza  
Penn State University

**Penn State students host the largest philanthropic event in the world and the dance party of the year.**

The Penn State IFC/Panhellenic Dance Marathon is more than its title could ever portray. THON is more than the largest student-run philanthropic event in the world; it's a year-long effort to raise money and awareness for the fight against pediatric cancer.

THON Weekend consists of a 46-hour no-sitting, no-sleeping dance marathon and takes place every February. It dates back to 1973, when thirty-nine couples danced for thirty hours straight. They raised about \$2,000 for charity that year, but 1997 was the year that The Four Diamonds Fund came into play.

Since then, THON has raised over \$101 million benefitting the Four Diamonds Fund at Penn State Hershey Children's Hospital. Over \$13 million was raised in 2014 alone. The Four Diamonds Fund helps kids fight cancer through financial support, medical team support, and research support. What is great about the fund

is that it covers the expenses for the care and treatment of the kids that is not covered by insurance. This allows the families to solely focus on the health and happiness of their child.

THON weekend is a time when the glimmer of hope that families hold on to all year is amplified into a crystal clear vision that cancer will be beat. It is a time when a burst of light shines on the darkest experiences of these children's lives. All weekend long, the energy in the Bryce Jordan Center is as strong and steady as the torrent of beach balls bouncing above the crowd. For forty-six hours, State College becomes a ghost town, as every ounce of positive energy in the Happy Valley is channeled into that arena, and children that spend far too much of their childhood in a hospital get to come to play with the "big kids."

THON is where Penn State students defy the "careless college kid" stereotype and everyone (including the frat boys) sheds some tears. Despite how tired the dancers get, they know the fight to stay awake and on their feet

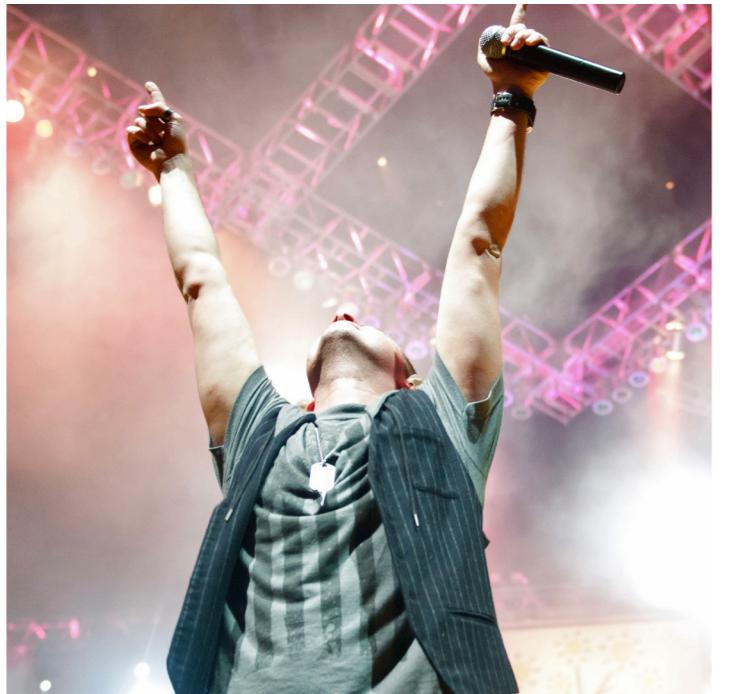
does not compare to the fight against cancer these children are up against.

Brian Dunn, senior and THON 2014 Director of Morale, describes walking into THON as "a feeling that cannot be replicated anywhere else." When asked to share a prominent THON memory, Brian described a time when he truly realized how big of a difference we, as Penn State students, were making. When he was a Morale Captain, as a junior, he was told to bring a family upstairs from the event floor to the concourse via elevator. While he was on the elevator, the THON child was bouncing off the walls. "I looked at his mom, and just smiled." Brian said, "She told me how she hasn't seen her child smile or laugh this hard since well before he was diagnosed with cancer."

THON 2014 Public Relations director, Dana Giacobello, has the job of overseeing the Public Relations Committee, which serves as the voice of THON. This committee spreads

awareness about THON and the fight against pediatric cancer on local, state, and national levels. Throughout the year, Dana is involved with planning major events that PR plays a huge role in, like the 100 Days Until THON celebration and the Mr. and Mrs. THON Pageant. Having been actively involved with THON since coming into Penn State, Dana said that she is able to see how THON makes a school of 40,000 students feel like a much closer, tight-knit community. Putting it perfectly, she said, "Being in the Bryce Jordan Center during the final four hours of THON, that community feeling is palpable."

I've always thought that it was difficult to explain THON to people outside of the Penn State community. But it is not THON that is hard to explain. Rather, it's just that words cannot express the magnitude of the altruism that permeates every fiber of our being and our mission. For the kids.



FOR THE KIDS  
TO DONATE NOW  
VISIT [THON.ORG](http://THON.ORG)

Photos courtesy of Penn State News  
and THON.org



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Join us at [bcorporation.net/bthechange](http://bcorporation.net/bthechange)



# THE GREAT GARBAGE PATCH

WE ARE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NORTH PACIFIC WITH NO LAND IN SIGHT, HUNTING FOR GARBAGE. ONE OF THE CREW SPOTS A BIGGER OBJECT THAT WE STEER TOWARDS TO HARPOON AND BRING ON BOARD. IT'S A FLOATING TIRE, AND BY THE AMOUNT OF ALGAE AND RUST ON IT, IT HAS BEEN OUT HERE A LONG TIME. GETTING CLOSER, WE SEE MORE GARBAGE. THIS TIME, A RUBBER FISHING FLOAT. AS WE SLOW THE MOTOR TO PICK IT UP, THE WATER AROUND THE BOAT STARTS TO CALM, AND SOMETHING ELSE CATCHES MY EYE, TINY BITS OF PLASTIC START SURFACING OUT OF OUR WAKE.

AT FIRST, I SAW JUST A FEW PIECES, BUT IT BECAME ALMOST UNFATHOMABLE HOW MANY TINY PLASTIC KALEIDOSCOPIC COLORS ARE ASCENDING OUT OF THE WATER. THEY HAD BEEN THERE THE WHOLE TIME. WE WERE JUST MOVING TOO FAST TO SEE THEM. AFTER HEARING ABOUT THE "GREAT PACIFIC GARBAGE PATCH" FOR SO LONG, I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE IT MYSELF, PLASTIC IS EVERYWHERE.

By Jennifer Brandon  
University of California, San Diego

Last semester, I had an opportunity to research on the R/V Falkor, a boat owned by the Schmidt Ocean Institute. The Falkor was sailing from Seattle to Hawaii on a transit, or "deadhead" leg, and the route would take them right through the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre. They heard about my work months before and I received an invitation to conduct my research on a week cruise.

As a PhD student in Biological Oceanography at Scripps Institute UCSD, I have been studying marine debris and plastic pollution for awhile now, but up until last semester I had never

seen it in a live environment, it was always in a lab. When I received the invitation, of course I said "Yes!" Not only because it was free research time, but also because the Falkor is one of the nicest research vessels around (there's a sauna!) After some ridiculously quick planning, a nervous 48 hours when I thought my equipment wouldn't make it in time, and the boat blowing a thruster, we made it out to sea towards "the Patch."

The North Pacific Subtropical Gyre is the largest continuous ecosystem on earth, covering an area of roughly 20 million

kilometers. Due to the way its currents flow, there is a large convergence zone where debris and garbage from around the world gathers. Debris has always gathered there, but natural debris biodegrades; our manmade garbage generally doesn't. If it does, it's on such a slow time scale that the gyre has now become a garbage patch of floating bottles and plastic of all shapes and sizes.

The plastic I am interested in collecting and analyzing is so small sometimes it can't be seen with a microscope; it's a byproduct of larger pieces of plastic that disintegrate into tinier and tinier pieces.



AN ESTIMATED  
10 BILLION TONS OF  
CONSUMER PLASTIC  
GO INTO OUR OCEANS  
EACH YEAR.

# SPECIAL THANKS

This small plastic, though less noticeable, may be the most harmful to the ecosystem because it's small enough to enter the food chain.

To test the plastic, I would drop a metal bucket overboard twice a day and filter the water to count the tiniest nanoparticles. Along with this, my goal was to preserve some water for future analysis to measure chlorophyll A and bacterial communities as well. Between the filtering and preserving process, I spent a lot of time on the Falkor's observation deck, looking for trash and radioing down to the captain to stop the boat when there was a big piece to pick up.

Before the trip, I gave a seminar to the crew about my research and to prepare them for what we would see. I got the impression that they really didn't believe me. One of the crustier sailors who had been a seaman his whole life, later told me in his Irish lilt, "I thought 'here's another scientist trying to cause alarm,' but it's amazing, you told us we would see fishing floats, bottles and nets. The first day I came up to look and I saw all three of those things. It might be even worse than you made it seem!"

It kind of surprised me that even the crew couldn't believe how much plastic was really out there. Watching the sailors become

obsessed with the trash has been one of the best parts of the whole cruise. They started stopping the boat even before I asked them to so they could pick up the big pieces they spotted. Watching their faces as they look out at the trash makes me realize my work is worth it. I may not be an activist and I may spend most of my days in a lab, but moments like this, watching others care about the fate of the ocean, means I'm doing something right.

Photos courtesy of Jennifer Brandon and Leighton Rolley



LOOKS CAN BE DECEIVING.

THE WATER LOOKS BLUE BECAUSE THE PLASTIC HAS ALREADY  
BROKEN DOWN INTO TINY PIECES, OR HAS SUNK TO THE DEPTHS BELOW  
THIS REGION IN THE PACIFIC OCEAN IS HOME TO ENOUGH CONSUMER WASTE TO FILL TEXAS.

## To all who helped put together this issue:

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This issue designed by Camille Ferruzzi

*THE WORLD IS OURS  
BY WHAT WE MAKE IT,  
STARTING TODAY.*

*LIVE MAJR*

